

## Secrets of the Courts of Europe

An Old Ambassador's Revelations of the Inner History of Famous Episodes Heretofore Cloaked in Mystery

Chronicle by ALLEN UPWARD

### MADAME THE AMBASSRESS

I had called to take leave of the ambassador on my approaching departure from Paris.

"I am going to insist that you shall stay here and dine," he demanded.

"If you promise to excuse my frock-coat to Madame, I accept with pleasure," I answered. "But on one condition—before I leave, you must relate to me that story of your experiences in the Quirinal, which you have so many times related to me more than usually romantic ending."

The ambassador smiled at me in delicacy.

"In the first place," he began, "it is necessary that you should understand that I am speaking of the time when I was in Rome as ambassador to the kingdom of Italy. I had ceased to be the friend of the pope, but owing to the strained character of our relations with Italy, I had not been admitted to the intimacy of Umberto."

"The affair of which I have promised to speak occurred some years ago, not long after my arrival in Rome, in fact. A state ball was being held one night at the palace, a function to which my position, of course, made it necessary that I should be invited. The scene was a brilliant one."

"In the center of the principal saloon stood King Umberto, his bluff mien of a country gentleman contrasting strangely with his elaborate military costume. Round him were grouped the officers of his household, sparkling with uniforms and orders, and the members of the government, with Signor Crispi at their head."

"I approached to pay my respects to his Majesty, prepared for the formal greeting with which he usually received me. To my surprise, his manner exhibited a striking transformation. He assumed a cordial smile as soon as he caught sight of me, stepped forward two paces, an honor usually reserved for the princes of reigning houses—and extended both hands in a hearty clasp of welcome."

"Amazed at this reception, I let my eye rove round mechanically, noting the impression produced by this condescension upon the other members of the group. The result was curious. Most of these witnesses were evidently surprised at what they saw, but Signor Crispi and one or two others were looking on with smiling faces, like the approving spectators of some comedy."

"Not satisfied with this display of cordiality, Umberto insisted on detaining me by his side from some minutes, chatting familiarly about a boat-hunt which had just taken place at his castle in the mountains."

"You must positively join us next time," he said; "it is a sport which you ought not to miss. And besides, I cherish the hope of seeing more of you than has yet been possible in this wretched Rome, where one has not a minute that is one's own."

"You are too good, sire," I responded. "The honor which you propose for me would be of all things that which I should most desire."

"As I said these words, I again glanced round me. My previous impression was confirmed. Before I had parted from the royal group I had become convinced that there was some intrigue on foot which could not be viewed with indifference by France, and that an attempt was being made to overcome my watchfulness."

"I passed on to tender my formal homage to Queen Margherita. Her Majesty, who on other occasions had treated me with almost mortifying coldness, confirmed my suspicions by altering her manner almost as much as King Umberto had done. At the same time I detected a certain embarrassment beneath this assumed friendliness, which told me that this queen—a really superior woman—was not altogether satisfied with the part she had been instructed to play."

"Filled with apprehension, and vainly trying to form some guess as to the nature of the mystery, I was moving distractedly through the crowded ball-rooms, when I suddenly caught sight of one of my few friends in the Italian court. This was Madame la Contessa D'Urbino, one of the ladies in waiting to Queen Margherita."

"This distinguished lady, who was believed to stand high in her Majesty's confidence, was at this time a widow, having lost her husband, General D'Urbino, about a year before. She was besides a woman of extraordinary fascination, possessed of beauty which would have commanded homage in any station. When I tell you that I, who am as you know indifferent to women, was not prepared to resist this charming Italian, you will perceive what she must have been."

"It is true that I had a particular motive for cultivating her friendship. In the isolated position in which I found myself, I foresaw that she might be able to render me the greatest services. A diplomatist has no scruples, and perhaps I did not sufficiently reflect on the fatal consequences which my attentions might have for the susceptible nature of the general's widow."

"You will easily imagine that I was not long in making my way to her side, on this occasion. She greeted me with tenderness and we found our way to a secluded corner where there was a bench under the shadow of an olive, and sat down."

"By this time I had resolved upon my course of action. This was to enlist Madame D'Urbino on my side, if possible, and through her to ascertain the truth as to the danger which I believed to threaten France. The situation, as you realize, was a delicate one. In order to make an ally of the beautiful Italian, it was first of all necessary to establish between us a relation of a more intimate kind than mere friendship. In the interest of France I prepared to make this sacrifice, and to assume for a time the tender character of a lover."

"The opening which I sought was furnished by Madame D'Urbino herself, who had evidently perceived that something was weighing on my mind."

"You are silent this evening, my friend," she remarked. "Perhaps you have had news which has distressed you."

"You are too good to interest yourself in me," I responded, assuming a melancholy tone.

"Do not say that," she cried with real feeling. "At least you do not believe that I regard you in any other light than as a cherished friend?"

"I took her hand respectfully and raised it to my lips."

"Your friendship will always remain my most prized possession," I answered, "even if the troubles which I foresee between our countries should force me to resign the hope of ever obtaining a warmer place in your regard."

"Madame D'Urbino turned on me a look of consternation. It was easy to see that she was ignorant of whatever was on foot."

"But, my friend, what you say is incredible!" she exclaimed. "What are these troubles which you apprehend?"

"Ask Queen Margherita," I retorted with bitterness. "Her Majesty is in the secret of this affair, of which as yet I have been able to learn nothing definite." I affected to hesitate for a moment, and then, as if yielding to an impulse, I cried out: "Ah if you could enable me to understand, and perhaps to remove this peril, what a service you would render to the cause of peace—to our friendship!"

"The beautiful widow retained enough shrewdness to perceive the seriousness of my remark."

"It would be difficult for you to ask me anything which I should be capable of refusing," she murmured, with some reluctance.

"I pressed her elegant hand which I had omitted to relinquish."

"Ah!" I whispered, "what you say encourages me to look forward to the time when I shall ask something of real importance."

"She wavered."

"But are you not asking me, in effect, to aid you against my own country?" she said, as if in doubt.

"And if I were?" I demanded, taking possession of her hand. "Do I not at the same time ask if you have a regard for me which is stronger than political considerations?"

"And again I ventured upon a tender salute."

"The ambassador was so much overcome by these touching reminiscences that it was some time before he could continue."

"In a few minutes everything was arranged. Lucia—that is to say, Madame D'Urbino—undertook to penetrate the secret of what was going forward, and to assist me in the struggle I foresaw."

"We decided that it would be imprudent for her to communicate with me by letter. Instead, we arranged that every afternoon at five o'clock, when she was relieved from her attendance on the queen, she should drive up and down the Corso, the most crowded street in Rome, where a meeting between us would have the appearance of chance, and would thus provoke no suspicion."

"I passed the next few days in a state of the keenest anxiety. Each afternoon at the hour agreed I took my way to the Corso, and at last one afternoon she signaled she had important news."

"It was impossible for us to stop our carriages in this narrow and crowded thoroughfare. I therefore alighted from mine, and walked along to meet that of the countess as she turned. In this way our encounter excited no attention from passers-by. My friend caused her carriage to halt for a moment and invited me to enter, and then, as I placed myself by her side, we drove slowly on, exchanging bows with our acquaintances along the route."

"In the meantime we conversed in tones too low to be heard. Like all women, Madame D'Urbino commenced by demanding flattery as the price of her services."

"It is easy to see that it is not for the sake of our friendship that

you have made your way to me so eagerly," she said, as I fixed a questioning look upon her.

"I changed my look to one of tenderness."

"And how do you know that this anxiety with which you reproach me is not assumed," I retorted, "as an excuse to cultivate your friendship—perhaps to test its strength?"

"She lowered her superb eyelashes. 'There is no necessity for that,' she murmured softly."

"I caught at her hand, but she withdrew it swiftly, and at once gave the conversation a practical turn."

"I have discovered two things, my friend; it is for your sagacity to detect the connection between them. In the first place, the Duc d'Ural is secretly in Rome as the envoy of the Comte de Chambord; in the second, a military expedition is preparing for some place abroad."

"This was sufficiently alarming. I knew the restless character of the late pretender to the French throne too well not to suspect at once that some serious conspiracy underlay these circumstances."

"I must know more than this," I answered, frowning. "I must ascertain the object of the duke's mission, and also the destination of this expedition."

"Madame D'Urbino regarded me gravely."

"I anticipated that you would say so," she answered, "and I have thought of a way by which you may achieve your object. But, in the first place, does the Duc d'Ural know you?"

"I believe not," I replied, wondering what was in her mind. "But in any case I should have no difficulty in sufficiently altering my appearance to deceive an ordinary observer."

"That is enough; I will tell you what I propose. The duke's negotiation is being carried on through the medium of Queen Margherita, who has appointed me to receive him and introduce him privately into her Majesty's apartments. He will come there tonight at half-past ten. What I propose is this: that you should come there beforehand, and let me admit you into one of the ante-rooms. Then on the duke's arrival I will bring him in to you. He will be made to think

that you have been deputed by the queen to draw up the heads of an agreement, and in this way you will be able to extract from him everything he knows."

"Ah, my friend, what brilliance, what invention!" I exclaimed, as she unfolded her admirable plan. "Depend upon my using this opportunity to the best advantage. But, in the meantime, is there no way of discovering the truth about these military preparations?"

"I have thought of that, too. I have a nephew in the army, a lieutenant in the Sardinian Cuirassiers. I will approach the queen with a request that he may be given a chance of winning glory on this expedition, and I may be able to extract some hint as to its destination."

"I could do nothing but press the hand of this admirable woman in silent gratitude. She was indeed born for the diplomatic service."

"Shortly afterwards we separated. On returning home I found waiting for me a cipher dispatch from Genoa reporting that a large number of transports were being equipped, but that the use to which they were to be put was being kept a profound secret. So far, therefore, the intelligence of the countess was confirmed."

"A little before half-past ten of the night I presented myself at one of the side entrances to the Quirinal, which Madame D'Urbino had indicated to me. A porter in plain clothes admitted me, and brought me up a private staircase into my friend's presence. After a brief conversation, of a character which would not interest you, she led me into another room, and left me to wait for the arrival of the Comte de Chambord's emissary."

"A few minutes passed in profound silence, and then a curtain was lifted

and a second personage came in. No sooner had I caught sight of his face than I gave a start which it was fortunate that he did not perceive. The fact is that the countess had been frightfully imposed upon. The man whom I saw before me was Henri V—the Comte de Chambord in person!"

"It was indeed fortunate that I had disguised myself, for I was perfectly well-known to the count, with whom I had once had an extraordinary adventure. Fortunately he was not in a suspicious mood. He bowed slightly as I rose at his entrance, and placed himself in a chair, giving me permission by a nod to do the same."

"I understand that the queen has appointed you to settle the preliminaries of the contracts, Signor," he began in very good Italian."

"I replied in the same language, the better to disguise my voice. Of course I had not the faintest idea what contract he referred to."

"Her Majesty has commanded me to receive your instructions in the matter," I replied."

"He nodded."

"I understand. There is of course the question of the dowry."

"Again I could scarcely conceal my agitation. So there was a question of a marriage beneath this mysterious visit to Rome—and of a marriage which the French republic could not view with indifference."

"The count proceeded: 'The sum which I authorize you to mention to the queen is twenty millions of francs. But you will no doubt remind her Majesty that the real dowry which my daughter brings to the house of Savoy is the friendship of the Legitimists of Europe.'"

"I began to understand. It was, without doubt, the beautiful Princess Clotilde, the belle of Europe, whose marriage was in agitation. Nor had I any real doubt as to the bridegroom who was proposed for her, when I said: 'I shall repeat your observations, sire. But the amount you name is liberal. The duke of Naples is not an extravagant prince.'"

"By the way in which this name was received I saw my guess must be correct. This young man, the heir to

would provide her with a friendly buffer between the French in Tunis and her own troops in Egypt."

"There was no time to lose in frustrating this design. I took a hurried farewell of Madame D'Urbino, and returned to the embassy. Thence, after resuming my ordinary appearance, I hastened round to my colleague at the Vatican embassy, and poured out the whole tale into his startled ears. Together we rushed off to wait upon the president of the Sacred Congregation, Cardinal Frattola."

"The cardinal received us with evident surprise, it being contrary to all etiquette that an ambassador to the Quirinal, as I was, should hold direct communication with the Vatican. But it did not need many words for me to justify my intrusion."

"At the conclusion of my story the cardinal fell back in horror."

"Never! such black duplicity!" he gasped out. And then, bringing down his clenched fist upon the arm of his chair, he added: 'I thank you, M. l'ambassadeur, for your information. Rest assured that the marriage shall not be carried out, even if his holiness has to excommunicate the bride and bridegroom!'"

"Satisfied with this emphatic declaration, I took my departure. It was not without a certain amount of malicious amusement that I pictured to myself the meeting next day between the pope and Henri V."

"But my task was not yet done. I had to see Signor Crispi, and prevent this Tripoli expedition before it was too late. I parted from my colleague, and drove alone to the residence of the prime minister."

"Late as was the hour, there were still some people in the street, and a solitary newsboy tried to sell me his last paper as I dismounted from my carriage. I bought it out of compassion for the starving wretch, and, crumpling it up in my hand, made my way up the steps of the palazzo."

"Fortunately Signor Crispi had not yet retired, and on my name being announced, he at once ordered me to be admitted."

"Well, M. l'ambassadeur," he said, rising to shake hands with me. 'I trust it is nothing untoward which procures me the pleasure of this visit at such an hour?'"

"Not in the least, my dear Signor Crispi," I replied with my most friendly smile. "On the contrary, I have come here to give you a piece of information for which I expect you to thank me."

"With these words I sat down in the chair which he had placed for me, and crossed my legs with the air of having come for a friendly chat."

"But the Sicilian was not deceived. I saw a quick look of apprehension come into his eye and depart again as he forced himself to assume an indifferent air."

"It is too good of you to give yourself this trouble," he muttered, glancing at a document which lay before him, and over which he had thrust a piece of blotting-paper at my entrance."

"Is this information of which you speak of such a nature that it will not keep until tomorrow?" he inquired with an affection of weariness which concealed a very real anxiety."

"That depends on how far things have gone," I answered cautiously. "However, you know me, and you know it is my character to be open to a fault."

"Here Crispi gave me a sly glance. 'I have to tell you that this marriage which you are arranging for the prince of Naples will not be permitted to take place.'"

"Crispi in vain endeavored to conceal his consternation. He had evidently not expected to find me so well informed."

"Explain yourself, M. l'ambassadeur," he said curtly, as soon as he had recovered himself. "This marriage of which you speak—"

"This marriage between the prince and the daughter of the Comte de Chambord," I put in, completing his unfinished sentence. "This marriage which has been endeavored to be concealed from Leo XIII, but of which his holiness is fully aware, and which he has announced his intention to frustrate at all costs."

"The minister's face fell. He gave me a despairing glance, and for one instant permitted his secret thoughts to escape him."

"Why did you not come to me first, before going to the pope? Perhaps we might have made a deal."

"The next instant he had resumed the official mask."

"I do not, of course, admit that any such marriage was in contemplation," he observed. "Nevertheless I note what you say as to its impossibility. Is there anything which you desire to add?"

"Merely this, my dear Signor Crispi, that the discovery of such an intrigue has made me take a view perhaps unduly suspicious of the armament you are preparing for service abroad."

"This time the Sicilian showed no confusion. He had no doubt suspected all along that this was the object of my visit. At the same time he made no attempt to disclaim the existence of these preparations, a circumstance which I noted with some alarm."

"Let me assure you that this armament covers no purpose hostile to France," was all he said. "It is exclusively an affair of the private interests of Italy."

"I am glad to hear it," I said gravely. "Then I may assure my government that the expedition which you are fitting out is not destined for Tripoli?"

"France held in check, there was no other power which would or could interfere. England was no doubt a consenting party to the scheme, which

he exclaimed harshly. 'Your spies are too ingenious; do not let me catch them!' Then, calming himself by an effort, he went on: 'In any case it is too late to make objections. By this time the fleet is already entering the straits of Messina.'"

"I trembled as I listened to this audacious declaration. You will perceive the gravity of the crisis. It was, as I have said since, the case of the cannon ball and the leg. Signor Crispi's object was to convince me that the cannon ball had commenced to roll; it was for me to establish on the contrary that it had not, and that France had put her foot down in the way."

"The fleet may have started, but it is not too late to alter its destination," I replied with firmness. "It will be necessary for you to telegraph at once. I notify you that France will look upon an invasion of Tripoli as an attack upon herself."

"Crispi turned pale. He saw the prize of his stealthy preparations slipping from his grasp. But his resources were not yet exhausted."

"I implore you to withdraw your notification," he said earnestly. "The object of the expedition is already public. The Gazette of Rome has received the official intimation, and it is no doubt already in type."

"Are you sure of what you say?" I responded with a meaning glance directed at the half-hidden document upon the table. "You have no doubt prepared the official notice, but perhaps it has not been dispatched?"

"Crispi started."

"You are indeed omniscient," he murmured with bitterness. "But after all the Gazette is of no consequence. The secret of the expedition is already public property; a paragraph on the subject appeared in the last edition of the *Bocca di Roma* this evening."

"For a moment I was staggered. If this were so the cannon ball had indeed begun to roll and to stop it would mean war. While I was hesitating I suddenly recollected the paper which had been thrust upon me by the newsboy outside. I unfolded it and glanced at the name. It was a copy of the *Bocca di Roma*."

"Then ensued a strange scene. With trembling hands I spread out the badly-printed sheet, casting my eye down column after column, while the prime minister of Italy sat back in his chair watching me, the beads of perspiration rolling down his forehead. And war between two mighty nations, a war perhaps involving half Europe and the lives of millions of men, hung on the outcome."

"At last I found the miserable paragraph on which so much depended. No sooner had my eye fallen upon the heading than I drew a deep sigh of relief. It read: 'Expedition to Africa.'"

"I read the paragraph through, laid down the paper, and looked Crispi in the face."

"It is not too late to alter the goal of your expedition, after all," I said. "There are other places in Africa besides Tripoli, and the invasion of which will not mean war with France."

"For half an hour longer he resisted, argued and implored. But I stood firm as a rock. At last he gave way. A wire was sent that night to Reggio to intercept the squadron, and in the morning the people of Italy learned that they were to acquire a colony on the shores of the Red sea."

"Of course I did not then foresee the disasters that were in store for this colony, on which I persuaded Crispi to seize as an alternative to Tripoli. But I had done my duty, and am not responsible for the results."

"Surely that is not all you have to tell me?" I remonstrated, as my host showed no sign of proceeding. "What of that charming Mme. D'Urbino, in whom you have interested me so strongly?"

"His excellency first frowned and then smiled."

"You have done well to remind me of the sequel to this adventure," he remarked graciously. "I have already repeated to you the prime minister's savage threat. It appears that my friendship for Mme. D'Urbino had already excited attention among the busybodies of the Quirinal, and it was not difficult for our enemies to guess something of the truth."

"In effect, a few days later I received a message from the countess requesting my attendance at the palace. On my arrival I found my beautiful friend in tears. She had just left the presence of the queen, who had upbraided her bitterly with her friendship for the enemies of her country."

"The queen will never forgive me, I am certain," said the unhappy countess, after describing the scene to me. "Moreover, she has made it impossible for us two to meet again. Her majesty went so far as to say that she could no longer consider me an Italian."

"Her majesty is right," I answered boldly, "and there is only one remedy for such a state of things. You must acquire French nationality."

"And how can I do that?" she murmured in confusion."

"I took her hand in mine."

"By becoming the wife of a Frenchman!"

"And this time it was not merely her hand which I kissed."

Hardly had his excellency pronounced these words when the door opened and a graceful and accomplished woman came in, smiling.

"Allow me to present to you," said the courtly old man, "Madame the Ambassador—formerly Mme. D'Urbino!"

A deep frown crossed his face as I pronounced this word."

"M. le Baron, you know too much!"

## ROAD BUILDING

### GREAT BENEFIT TO FARMERS

Three-Hour Trip to Town Cut Down to Thirty Minutes by Advent of Gasoline Motor Car.

(By L. J. OLLIER.)

The prosperity of a state depends largely upon good roads. They mean cheaper transportation, better living conditions, and happier homes. Quick communication ranks as the great factor in the universal dissemination of knowledge. Where good roads abound sectionalism cannot exist.

The desire for good roads leading to a city that those with automobiles could have a greater pleasurable touring radius first brought the matter prominently to the fore as a good roads movement with automobile backing.

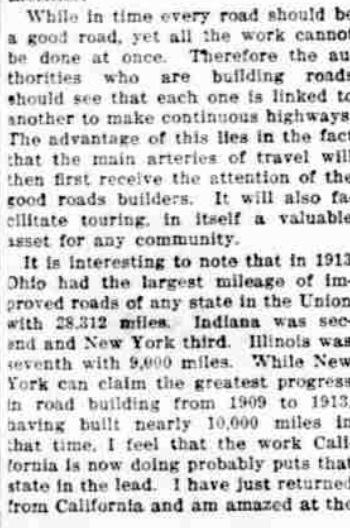
Gradually the farmer, antagonistic at first, began to take an interest. With good roads and an automobile he could cut down the three hour trip to town to perhaps thirty minutes.

Good roads brought the doctor quickly—at a time when minutes were precious. Good roads and an automobile took the family to town in the evening, something unheard of before, or to visit a friend or relative in a distant part of the county. When farmers learned that other farmers were doing these things, that good roads and automobiles made them possible, then they, too, desired good roads for their own county.

By means of the telephone and quick motor truck delivery the farmer is now able to top the market. He can rush his produce to market at the right moment to command the best price. But he could not do it were his roads not well built and in good repair. Consequently the farmer is now most active in the agitation for good roads and jealous of any legislative power delegated to irresponsible authorities.

While in time every road should be a good road, yet all the work cannot be done at once. Therefore the authorities who are building roads should see that each one is linked to another to make continuous highways. The advantage of this lies in the fact that the main arteries of travel will then first receive the attention of the good roads builders. It will also facilitate touring, in itself a valuable asset for any community.

It is interesting to note that in 1913 Ohio had the largest mileage of improved roads of any state in the Union with 28,312 miles. Indiana was second and New York third. Illinois was seventh with 9,000 miles. While New York can claim the greatest progress in road building from 1909 to 1913, having built nearly 10,000 miles in that time, I feel that the work California is now doing probably puts that state in the lead. I have just returned from California and am amazed at the



Gravel Road Near Richmond, Ind.

wonderful way in which this state is taking hold of good roads work.

Three years ago California appropriated \$18,000,000 for good roads. The various counties each appropriated in addition from \$250,000 to \$3,500,000 for the improvement of county roads which are feeders to the main highways. Los Angeles county has over 400 miles of improved roads. By September one will be able to drive from Los Angeles to San Francisco by the coast route and return by the valley route over continuous good roads—a boulevard 1,000 miles in length.

The same agitation that brought California its appropriation for good roads is now being waged elsewhere throughout the West. In some places actual work is in progress. The state of Utah has passed favorably upon an improved road that eventually will be part of one all the way from the Yellowstone National park to the Grand canyon of the Colorado river in Arizona.

In the East New York is working out its good roads plan and I am interested in the efforts Illinois is making to improve its roads.

### Work for Convicts.

If set to work on our public highways the convicts on our prisons would go out into the world after their sentences are fulfilled better qualified to take their places as self-respecting men and stronger mentally, morally and physically. This aspect of the good roads' subject is receiving constantly increasing attention.



"And How Can I Do That?" She Murmured.